

## ATTITUDE TOWARDS WORK EXPERIENCE PROGRAMMES

The work experience programme is conceived to be an integral part of the degree programmes in agricultural and allied sciences. In all Agricultural Universities in India, with many revisions of the syllabi and curricula, the importance of work experience has been stressed by several committees and academic workshops intended for the perfection of higher education in agriculture. In the Kerala Agricultural University also, work experience programmes in crop production, plant protection, and nursery techniques and management are well tailored with undergraduate curriculum of agricultural sciences as compulsory courses.

The involvement of students in these practical oriented courses is much influenced by their attitude towards the work experience programmes, which are distinct from the theory based courses. Attitude towards any **psychological** object or social processes will certainly have an influence on the performance of the individual in that context. **Thurstone** (1946) defined attitude as the degree of positive or negative affect associated with some **psychological** object. Here, an attempt was made to study the attitude of undergraduate students of agriculture in the Kerala Agricultural University towards the work experience programmes in the curricula in relation to some of the personal characteristics such as gender (male or female), parental occupation (agriculture or others) and social background (rural and urban).

To measure the attitude of the students towards work experience **programmes**, a scale was constructed and standardised following the **Likert** Method of **summated** ratings (Edwards, 1969). The pilot study was conducted using 30 statements among the final year B.Sc.(Ag) students, College of Horticulture under the Kerala Agricultural University and 20 statements were selected after doing item analysis. The selected statements included both favourable and unfavourable with largest 't' values, ranging from 3.16 to 6.37. The reliability by **test-retest** method with a high correlation

coefficient of 0.85 and content validity of the scale were also established before its application.

The scale was administered among 60 undergraduate students randomly selected from the College of Horticulture. The subjects were asked to give their response on each statement on a five point continuum viz., strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree and strongly disagree with **weightages** five, four, three, two and one respectively. For the unfavourable items, the scoring system was reversed. The total score of each respondent was obtained by adding up his / her scores on individual items.

The mean attitude score for the sample was calculated and found to be **56.1**. The sixty students were categorized into two, based on the mean score.

The influence of the selected **personal** characteristics of the agriculture students on their attitude towards the work experience programmes was identified using **chi-square** test. It was found that gender and social background were significantly influencing their attitude towards the work experience.

It was further observed that the mean attitude score for the 33 male students was significantly higher (61.44) than that of the 27 female students (52.29). Probably, the male students might have perceived better the utility of the practical oriented work experience programmes, which might be highly relevant for their future career in addition to the easiness for better performance in the physical tasks when compared to female students to obtain better grades in the course.

The sample contained 38 students with rural background and 22 students with urban background. The students with rural background had a higher attitude scores (57.18) when compared to those with urban background (56.4). The social background, which moulds an individual's life orientation, has

Table 1. Scale to measure the attitude of agricultural students towards work experience programmes

| Sl. No. | Statements   | Y value |
|---------|--|---------|
| 1       | I participate in the work experience classes with pleasure   | 6.37    |
| 2       | Work experience courses are included in the syllabus only to put the students into difficulties                      | 5.78    |
| 3       | Work experience should be an integral part of the syllabus   | 5.63    |
| 4       | Work experience helps a student to accustom with field problems  | 5.45    |
| 5       | I do not like field work since it is a time killer   | 5.44    |
| 6       | Work experience course increases the confidence among the agricultural students                                      | 5.43    |
| 7       | The learning in the class rooms become complete only through work experience   | 5.04    |
| 8       | Work experience consumes a lot of students' precious time  | 5.03    |
| 9       | Work experience weaken the students morally and it is not suited to their status                                     | 4.85    |
| 10      | Work experience should be given in all major courses   | 4.73    |
| 11      | Work experience programme is a course to B.Sc.(Ag) students  | 4.69    |
| 12      | Work experience is not a useful practice, hence be abolished   | 4.41    |
| 13      | Work experience reduces the students' learning capacity  | 4.38    |
| 14      | Work experience diminishes the students' enthusiasm for the B.Sc.(Ag) course   |         |
| 15      | Work experience makes learning unforgettable   | 4.28    |
| 16      | I do not like work experience since it needs hours of work in the sun and rain                                       | 4.16    |
| 17      | I don't like work experience since it demands more strain to get good grades   | 4.09    |
| 18      | Work experience gives a chance to the agricultural students to verify the theoretical knowledge they gained          | 3.23    |
| 19      | Half of the credit load in B.Sc.(Ag) programme should be for work experience courses                                 |         |
| 20      | Due to work experience there is a rapid progress in the students knowledge about cultivation aspects of common crops | 3.16    |

Table 2. Attitude of agricultural students towards work experience programmes ( n = 60)

| Sl. No. | Category                     | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------|------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| 1       | High group<br>(Score > 56.1) | 29        | 48.33      |
| 2       | Low group<br>(Score < 56.1)  | 31        | 51.67      |

naturally influenced the attitude of the agricultural students towards the dignity of

Table 3. Influence of selected personal characteristics of agricultural students on their attitude towards work experience programmes

| Sl. No. | Characteristic      | $\chi^2$ |
|---------|---------------------|----------|
| 1       | Gender              | 13.136** |
| 2       | Social background   | 5.921*   |
| 3       | Parental occupation | 1.932    |

\*\* Significant at 0.01 level ; \* Significant at 0.05 level

manual work involved in the work experience programme.

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